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THE SLATER FUND AND HAMPTON INSTITUTE

By W. T. B. Williams, Agent

In 1882 Mr. John F. Slater of Norwich, Conn. appropriated $1,000,000 for the education of colored people, and established a board for the administration of the fund. His purpose is stated as follows: "The general object which I desire to have exclusively pursued is the uplifting of the lately emancipated population of the Southern States, and their posterity, by conferring on them the blessings of Christian education. The disabilities formerly suffered by these people, and their singular patience and fidelity in the great crisis of the nation, establish a just claim on the sympathy and good will of humane and patriotic men. I cannot but feel the compassion that is due in view of their prevailing ignorance which exists by no fault of their own."

He left the board very free in their powers for carrying out his purposes. He suggested but one means to this end: "the training of teachers from among the people requiring to be taught, if, in the opinion of the corporation, by such limited selection the purposes of the trust can be best accomplished; and the encouragement of such institutions as are most effectually useful in promoting this training of teachers."

After due investigation the board thought it wise to act upon Mr. Slater's suggestion, and the training of teachers became one of the fundamental activities of the fund. It soon became apparent, however, to the General Agent, Dr. Atticus G.

Haygood, that industrial training for the colored people was imperative. This form of education was also adopted, with the approval of Mr. Slater, as an essential feature of the work to be carried on by the fund. As early as April 26th, 1883, the board had resolved, among other things, "to confine its aid to such schools as are best fitted to prepare young colored men and women to become useful to their race; and that institutions which give instructions in trades and other manual occupations, that will enable youths to make a living, and to become useful citizens, be carefully sought out and preferred in appropriations from this Fund; and that so far as practicable, the scholars receiving aid from this foundation shall be trained to some manual occupation simultaneously with their mental and moral instruction."

At this time, the first appropriation, $20,000, for carrying into effect the purposes of the Board, was made.

Hampton Institute seems to have attracted the attention of the Board from the very beginning. They found at Hampton already in successful operation the very ideas that appealed most strongly to them. The two organizations thenceforth became mutually helpful. In his first report to the Board, Dr. Haygood speaks as follows: "Investigation shows that only a small number of the higher grade schools for colored youth have made any experiments in connecting handicraft training with instruction in books. With the work done by Hampton Institute, under the direction of General Armstrong, the Board is familiar. The results accomplished at this institution have

called attention to the desirablenesss and practicability of making instruction in books coincident with industrial training."

The following is a partial list of the schools aided by the first appropriation from the Slater Fund:

Clark University	Atlanta, Ga.	$2,000
Tuskegee Normal School	Tuskegee, Ala.	100
Tougaloo University	Tougaloo, Miss.	1,000
Claflin University	Orangeburg, S.C.	2,000
Atlanta University	Atlanta, Ga.	2,000
Talladega College	Talladega, Ala.	2,000
Shaw University	Raleigh, N. C.	2,000
Hampton Institute	Hampton, Va.	2,000
Spelman Seminary	Atlanta, Ga.	2,000

By October 16th of this same year, 1883, the list of schools aided had been greatly lengthened, including such well-known institutions as Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Howard University; and Tuskegee Normal School had been raised from its little appropriation of $100 to $1,000. Dr. Haywood speaks of the principal of the Tuskegee Normal School as follows: "Mr. B. T. Washington, (a colored man himself, educated chiefly at 'Hampton Institute,') has shown very great energy and capacity in providing for and managing his work." And he quotes Mr. Washington thus: "For the impetus given to the Industrial Department the school is chiefly indebted to the John F. Slater Fund."

The same might as well be said about the industrial departments of practically every colored school of importance in the South. For practically every one of them has at one time or another received aid from the Slater Fund. The lists of the appropriations of this Fund from year to year until the present

time are pretty accurate indications of the successes and failures of these industrial departments. It is significant that Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute have remained on these lists throughout the years with steadily increasing appropriations.

In 1888 the General Agent of the Slater Fund quotes from Hampton Institute's report as follows: "The Governor of Virginia, in his last annual message to the Legislature, called attention to the need of practical instruction in the common schools of the State, to be encouraged by some local aid, and referred to the Hampton Institute as the source of supply for technical teachers for Negroes. We hope to meet this demand in part . ... I believe that the Slater Fund is making its mark in the South by the wisdom and vigor with which it has pushed and encouraged industrial training."

In this same report he tells of the various industries being carried on at Tuskegee Institute, and adds: "This school is an object lesson in Alabama."

As to the importance of industrial education, President Woodworth of Tougaloo University is quoted in this report as follows: "The industrial work is a distinct help to the school. Every week of my observation deepens the impression that any education of the colored people which overlooks this feature is greatly defective. Not alone for its own sake in added power of learning, but because of its moral features, its inculcation of honesty, economy, industry, self-dependence, and self-reliance, is of inestimable value."

Having been elected a bishop in the M. E. Church, South, Dr. Haygood, the General Agent, resigned in 1891. Dr. J. L. M. Curry was chosen to take his place. Dr. Curry found the time auspicious for conducting a general campaign in the interest of Negro education. He not only visited the private schools, and local public school officials, but carried his educational propaganda into city councils, and into the several state legislatures, as well as before all sorts of assemblies which he was frequently called upon to address. In these ways he did more than any one else up to his time to awaken the public to its responsibility in the matter of Negro education. He saw that it was not only the duty of the public to provide education for the Negro, but that it was impossible in any other way to educate the masses of the colored people. In 1896, Dr. H. B. Frissell wrote Dr. Curry as follows: "General Armstrong himself used frequently to speak of the important work which you were able to accomplish in your official relations with the Slater and Peabody Fund Boards, in helping the people of the South to a better understanding of the needs of the blacks, and toward the strengthening of the system of public schools, which is of such vital importance to the best interests of this part of the country."

In 1891, the Board decided to concentrate their aid upon a comparatively few schools, having regard especially "to the business methods by which their affairs are conducted, to the service they render in the training of teachers, and to the

efforts they make in the promotion of industrial education."

At this meeting the Board passed a resolution thanking General Armstrong, President Bumstead of Atlanta University, and others "for valuable information they have given the Board on the subject of industrial education."

Dr. Haygood said in his last report to the Board: "At the beginning (of the Slater Fund work) industrial training was well established at Hampton Institute, under the wise and energetic direction of General S. C. Armstrong. In was in a meagre and tentative way,— there were no means to do more, — attempted at perhaps half a dozen schools for the colored people. At this time (1891) every school in connection with the Slater Fund recognizes the utility and necessity of industrial training; so does every important school for the Negro race, whether aided by the fund or not."

In 1893 Dr. Frissell expresses gratitude to Dr. Curry and the Slater Fund Trustees "not only for the money aid given, which, owing to General Armstrong's illness, has been especially helpful, but for the impetus which you and your Board have given the school toward progress along lines which seem to us in accordance with its true development."

In 1894 General Armstrong's "Memoranda" were printed in the proceedings of the Slater Fund.

Mr. Booker T. Washington reported in 1896 that, "Not only individuals but institutions throughout the South look more and more to Tuskegee for information and tangible plans for the starting and conducting of schools that combine literary and

industrial training. I desire to express the sincere thanks of this institution to Dr. Curry, the Agent of the John F. Slater Fund, for the help which he has given by his numerous visits, and in many other ways."

In 1898 the Trade School at Hampton Institute was opened. Dr. Frissell wrote the Trustees of the Slater Fund as follows: "The opening of the Trade School, in which the Slater Fund Board has shown such an interest, has given a new impetus to this work (training of industrial and academic leaders). The subscription of $10,000 by Mr. Morris K. Jesup toward the erection of a building, and the promise of your Board of $6000 toward its annual expenses, have given confidence as to its future." Dr. Frissell had written earlier to the Board regarding the completion of the building as marking "an epoch in the history not only of the school, but of the whole Negro race."

Of the dedication of the Slater-Armstrong Memorial Trades Building at Tuskegee Institute in 1900, Dr. Curry reports: "Men and women from the North and the South, interested in Negro education, especially in industrial training, were present. The successful completion of the enterprise, a monument to the great educator who presides over the institution, was an era in the cause of sound instruction and a stimulus to continued and hopeful exertions in the future along the same line."

Another suggestive work supported by the Slater Fund and centering somewhat about Hampton was the Southern Industrial Classes. The headquarters for this work was in Norfolk. It

started as a sort of settlement idea making especially for better homes. It included such work as mothers' meetings, King's Daughters, and some industrial work. The latter finally became the dominant feature and spread to Norfolk County, Portsmouth, Newport News, and Warwick and Elizabeth City counties about Hampton. Much of what was done is now carried on by the Jeanes Fund industrial teachers in the counties.

Down to 1901 over $700,000 had been disbursed by the Fund, and some fifty schools had been aided. For the subsequent years to 1916 the educational appropriations have averaged about $63,000 annually.

In all the years Hampton Institute has received from the Slater Fund a little more than $250,000; Tuskegee Institute has received about $225,000.

The Fund was established at a most opportune time in the history of Negro education in the United States. There is no doubt that it exerted a tremendous influence in the direction of industrial education for colored people, and indirectly had its effect upon all education in America. It was particularly helpful in institutions like Hampton and Tuskegee where, more than elsewhere, the initiative in industrial education was being taken and many new and costly experiments had to be made. It has been especially valuable to these schools and to such others as Spelman Seminary, Atlanta University, Talladega College, Fisk University, and Shaw University, and many others where special efforts have been made at the training of teachers.

Perhaps Dr. Tupper, the able president of Shaw University for many years, did not overstate the case when he said: "I cannot speak in too strong terms of the good accomplished by the Slater appropriation. I wish to express the conviction, after long years of experience and observation, that the stimulus given the colored people, in the way of industrial work in the schools aided by the Slater Fund, is the most far-reaching and beneficial of all that has been done for them, save that of moral and religious training."

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